

DPH Shares Thanksgiving COVID-19 Testing, Vaccine Closures and Safe Gathering Recommendations

DOVER, DE (Nov. 18, 2021) – The Division of Public Health (DPH) is sharing anticipated closures related to COVID-19 testing and vaccination sites, as well as recommendations for holding a safe Thanksgiving gathering.

All Public Health Clinics that offer COVID-19 vaccination will be closed Nov. 25 and Nov. 26 in observance of the Thanksgiving holiday. Additionally, the clinics and Walgreens will be closed for COVID-19 testing starting Wednesday, Nov. 24.

While DPH standing vaccine sites at the Blue Hen Corporate Center in Dover, Canby Park in Wilmington, Georgetown Plaza in Sussex County and Oxford/University Plaza in Newark will be closed for vaccinations, the sites will be open for Curative COVID-19 testing on Wednesday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Friday-Sunday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Visit de.gov/gettested to schedule your appointment. Other testing and vaccine sites may be open. Visit de.gov/getmyvaccine for a list of vaccine locations.

Additionally, over the Thanksgiving break, Delaware's COVID-19 Call Center will be closed on Thursday and Friday, but will answer e-mails to DPHcall@delaware.gov beginning Friday, Nov. 26. The Call Center will resume answering both e-mails and calls to 1-866-408-1899 on Monday, Nov. 29.

Concerned about a winter resurgence in COVID-19 cases again this year, DPH is also sharing recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on planning

safer Thanksgiving gatherings. Though masking and gathering restrictions are relaxed compared to last year, the virus continues to circulate in the community.

“The rate of COVID-19 positive cases increased by 16% since last week, with the highest rates among children ages 5 to 17,” said **DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay**. “Halloween parties likely contributed to the increase. We want to get ahead of things and prevent another holiday surge.”

As of Nov. 18, more than 83% of the state’s adult population has received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, according to CDC data. In contrast, unvaccinated persons continue to drive case rates and hospitalizations. During the week of Nov. 1 – Nov. 7, 82% of Delaware’s hospitalizations were among unvaccinated and partially vaccinated people.

Vaccination continues to be the strongest recommendation to protect yourself from COVID-19, and the biggest action you can take toward participating in a safe holiday gathering. This includes getting your first dose of the vaccine if you have not already done so, your second dose, (or third dose if you are immunocompromised), or booster dose. Eligibility for a booster dose of the vaccine is expected to be expanded on Friday, Nov. 19, and DPH encourages individuals to monitor local news channels and de.gov/boosters for updated information.

Getting children, especially those ages 5 –11 who are newly eligible for the vaccine, vaccinated with their first dose prior to the Thanksgiving holiday is a good way to ensure they are protected. Full vaccination using the pediatric dose of the COVID-19 vaccine was found to be more than 90 percent protective against developing symptomatic COVID-19. No severe vaccine-related side effects or severe allergic reactions were identified during clinical trials.

Here’s are other tips for having a safe Thanksgiving holiday:

- Get tested for COVID-19 before celebrating with a people from multiple households and different parts of the country.
- If you have symptoms of COVID-19, or had close contact with someone who has it, **stay home**. Do not host or attend a gathering.
- Smaller gatherings are better than larger gatherings to enable you to social distance from those who are not vaccinated. Those who are unvaccinated should get tested prior to Thanksgiving to ensure they are negative for COVID-19.
- Wear a face mask. Unvaccinated family members, including children ages 2 years and older, should wear a mask in all indoor public settings. People with a weakened immune system, who are at increased risk for severe disease, should also mask up.
- Communicate COVID-19 ground rules to invited guests, including expectations around testing before or after gathering, vaccination or masking requirements.
- Gather outdoors when possible. Avoid crowded, poorly ventilated spaces. Getting together for a holiday walk, flag football game, picnic, or virtual cocktails are fun alternatives to an indoor sit-down meal.
- Do not travel unnecessarily unless you and your companions are fully vaccinated. Individuals who are not fully vaccinated and must travel should follow CDC's domestic travel or international travel recommendations at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>.

The Public Health Communications Collaborative provides tips in a simple recipe card format that is available for downloading in flyer form and social media format: <https://publichealthcollaborative.org/resources/toolkit-thanksgiving-2021-safety-tips/>.